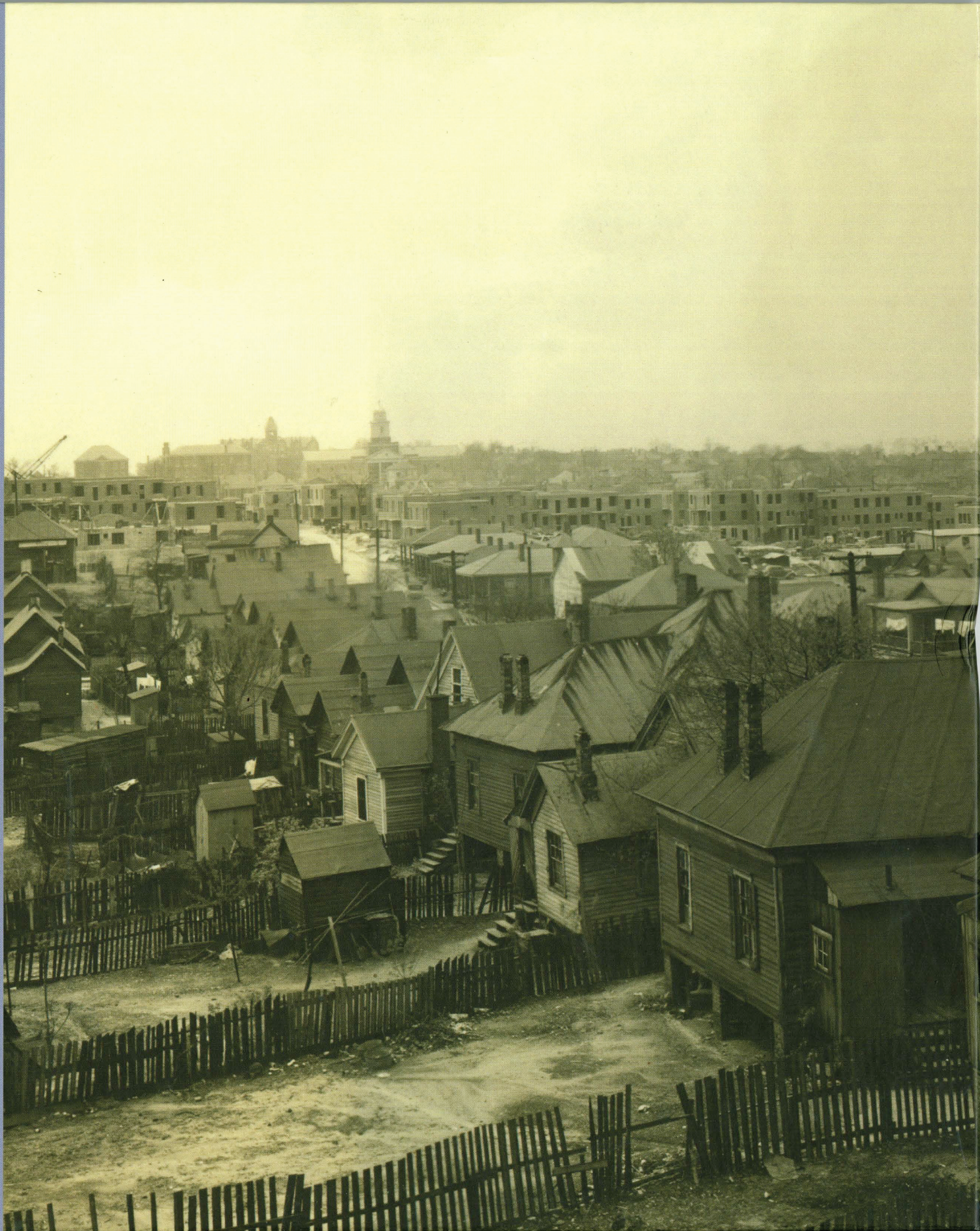


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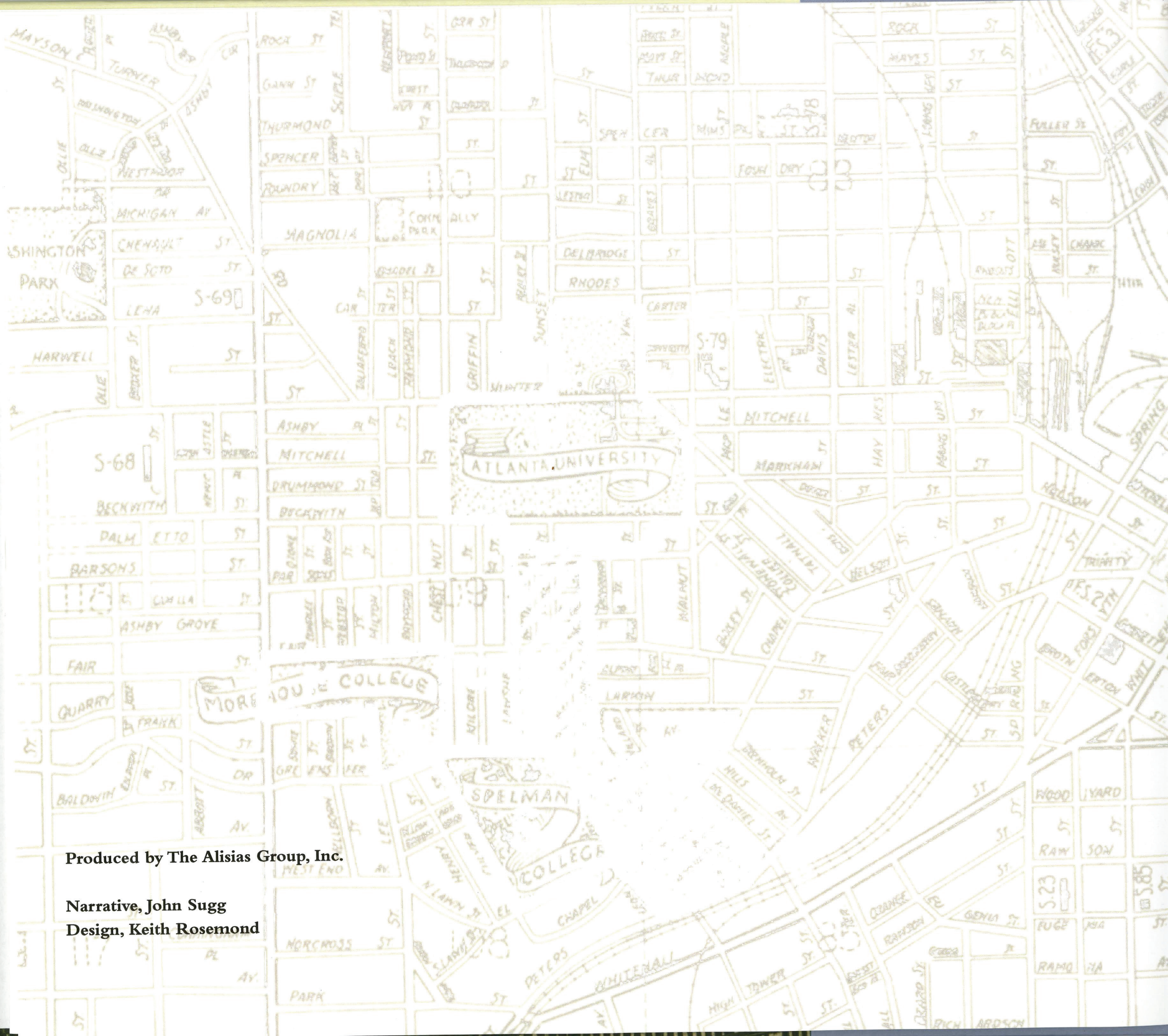
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— HOW —  
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Produced by The Alisias Group, Inc.

Narrative, John Sugg

Design, Keith Rosemond



# — HOW — **HOPE** — CAME TO — **ATLANTA**

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# Introduction

## **Dr. John Hope: Educator, Civil Rights Activist and Champion of Decent Housing for Low-Income Americans**

By John F. Sugg

On a hot-as-only-Atlanta -can-be-hot afternoon in 1934, two unlikely companions – wealthy white real estate magnate Charles F. Palmer and black educator and civil rights activist Dr. John Hope – trudged up a hill on the west side of the city. It was a short trip in distance, but it symbolized a tumultuous step in a journey by the two men to achieve a long-sought goal: the end of Atlanta's festering slums.

The culmination of their venture was a linchpin for President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal: the creation of federal subsidized public housing. The first public housing in America was Techwood Homes near Georgia Institute of Technology. The fourth housing project built in Atlanta was John Hope Homes near what is now called the Atlanta University Center (AUC). That proximity of AUC with the bold venture of modern housing for low-income families, was a fitting tribute for Dr. Hope. This book memorializes Dr. Hope and the reality that became his dreams.

Hope aspired to clean up the neighborhood around his beloved black institutions of higher learning, then composed of Atlanta College, Clark Col-

lege, and Morehouse College, now called AUC. Hope also had a broader mission: the quest for full equality for blacks in American life. As a step along the way, Hope saw better housing for Atlanta's African-Americans as nothing less than "social, educational, and cultural influences unsurpassed in any Negro neighborhood in the United States."

At the time, America's population was about 122 million – meaning that, as Franklin Delano Roosevelt said in his second inaugural address, on January 20, 1937, "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed."

If the nation was ill-housed, and the South was worse than the rest of the nation, then two blighted patches of Atlanta were among the worst of the worse: Techwood Flats and Beaver Slide. While he was teaching at Atlanta University, W.E.B. Du Bois was commissioned John Hope to study Beaver Slide. Du Bois wrote: "Its drab and dirty houses; its mud, dust and unpaved streets; its lack of water, light and sewage; its crowded and unpoliced gloom."

In one of the few examples in the South where "separate" was, more or less, "equal," comparable housing projects for whites and blacks would be built during the late 1930s in Atlanta, and become the first federally subsidized public housing projects in the nation. Techwood Homes, later adjoined by Clark Howell Homes, would be for whites. University Homes, augmented by John Hope Homes, would be for blacks.

For Hope and Palmer, it was an unorthodox alliance. Not only were they from different sides of Atlanta, they were separated by the almost unbridgeable gulf of the racist Jim Crow society of the South. About the only thing the two men had in common was they had to struggle to get a higher education.

Still, circumstances made them respectful partners.

John Hope was born in 1868 in Augusta, Georgia. He was the son of a white Scottish man and an African-American woman. The couple, during the period just before to just after the Civil War, defied conventions. After his father's death, Hope dropped out of school in the eighth grade year to help support his family. Five years later, in 1886, he decided to go back and finish his education at a preparatory school in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1890, Hope continued his education at Brown University on scholarship. Hope in 1906 accepted a position as a professor at the Atlanta Baptist College, now known as Morehouse College, and moved to Georgia with his new wife, Lugenia D. Burns. He worked at the black colleges in Atlanta for 30 years.

Hope played a dual role in leading the African-American community – as an educator determined to build a "Negro university" in the South, and as a civil rights leader. He was a founder of the Niagara Movement, an anti-segregation group and a predecessor to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a group Hope also helped lead.

Slum clearance and public housing would mark the end of John Hope's life – he would die as the first of America's great housing projects was opening – and one of the second-stage housing projects, adjacent to his cherished University Homes, would be named for the educator. For Palmer, on the other hand, the obsession over slum clearance and civic involvement overwhelmed the more mundane life of a real estate developer. He would go on to become President Roosevelt's Defense Housing Coordinator



in 1940 and during World War II he was a special assistant to the President leading a mission to Great Britain to investigate that nation's plan for post-war housing and economic development.

The union of Hope and Palmer, and their joint aspirations, was highly emotional – as was exemplified on that trek up the Beaver Slide hill and the events that led to it. Despite rapidly failing health, Hope had been “enthusiastic and gave his endorsement” in 1933 when he was recruited into the slum clearance initiative.

It was only a first victory in a skirmish in Atlanta. The war to bring decent housing to all Americans would continue for decades – and it still goes on today. Yet for two men, it was a huge milestone, capping the distinguished service of John Hope and launching the most important phase of Charles Palmer's life.

Palmer, in his memoir, *Adventures of a Slum Fighter*, recalls the victory march the two men made in Beaver Slide hill in 1934:

One smoldering afternoon we climbed a slope of Beavers' Slide together. I had to hold his arm to assist him part of the way. But when he reached the top, his heavy gray head lifted, and his clear blue eyes swept down across the sorry scene below with what I can only describe as militant benevolence. The thought struck me that here was a man who had probably worked harder and braved more scorn than anyone my life had ever touched.

“I've dreamed about this place changing into something beautiful,” he said, making a wide gesture with his hand. “Not pretty, but straight and clean and full of light.”

“We're on our way,” I said. “We won't have too many problems.”

“Oh, yes,” he said sadly, “there will be great difficulties, I'm afraid.”

“Do you think we might fail?”

“Fail?” Dr. Hope smiled. “Of course not. But we will have a struggle; and there will be times along the way when we will think we're beaten.”

It made me proud to have him speak of the two of us as people working side by side. And that is the way it was for more than two long years, taking our beatings together and enjoying the inspiring moments of slow but steady progress. At each rough passage along the road, he mustered from somewhere a flare of extra strength, so it seemed that I felt his thin hand assisting me as I had helped him on the slope of Beavers' Slide that day.

John Hope was to live to see the kind of beauty he had hoped for replace that slum.

The story started by Hope and Palmer had many chapters. Throughout the 1930s, '40s and '50s, public housing was a stunning success, enabling low-income working families to get a start in building the American Dream. As the decades wore on, public policies deteriorated – rather than public housing being a step on and up in life, the “projects” became prisons of poverty from which families couldn't escape, where joblessness and low educational attainment were ingrained.

In Atlanta, beginning in 1994, when Renee Lewis Glover became president and CEO of the Atlanta Housing Authority, the spirit of Hope and Palmer was rekindled. Just as those men had torn down slums to build great housing for people of modest means, Glover's vision at AHA was to tear down the now deteriorated housing projects, and replace them with vibrant, successful mixed-income, mixed-use communities. AHA now provides assistance to thousands more families than when the housing projects were still standing. Those families now live in the mixed-income communities that replaced the projects, or they in housing voucher-assisted homes chosen by the families.

Atlanta led the way in the 1930s with public housing. And it leads the nation today in ending the blight that killed public housing.

“The stories of Charles Palmer and John Hope should be told in every school in Atlanta, if not the nation,” Glover says. “They created a better society, and many tens of thousands of families led better lives because of their work. Dr. Hope, especially, with his work in housing, education and civil rights is one of the great giants of our city's past. We honored him by building John Hope Homes, and we honor him today by this book, for the Atlanta Housing Authority's pioneering programs in recent years to end concentrated poverty and give low-income Atlantans their opportunity to be part of America's mainstream.”



## John Hope: The Educator

John Hope, one of the most influential African-American educators in Atlanta's history, was born June 2, 1868, at the dawn of a crucial period in race relations in the United States. He would become a pivotal leader for his race and for humanity, pointing the way forward to a better life.

"The Negro must enter the higher fields of learning. He must be prepared for advanced and original investigation," he said. "The progress, dignity, and respectability of our people depend on this."

Hope was born in Augusta, Georgia. His father was white and mother was black. Hope could have chosen to pass as white, but was more drawn to his African American roots.

Upon his father's death in 1876, Hope dropped out of school to help support his family. Five years later he returned to finish his education at a preparatory school in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1890, Hope entered Brown University on a scholarship. Hope's extensive school bills needed to be paid off so he worked at The World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where he met his future wife, Lugenia Burns. With enough money to pay off his debt, he returned and received his bachelor's degree in 1894. Hope excelled academically and was chosen to be the orator at his commencement ceremony.



*John and Lugenia Hope*

In September 1894, Hope moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to teach at Roger Williams University, a small liberal arts school founded in 1866 for freed slaves. Hope went on to coach the college's first football team.

"Sports teach them how to contest without losing self-respect. It means acquiring bravery and gentility," was his outlook on training.

In 1898, Hope accepted a position as a professor and bookkeeper at Atlanta Baptist College, now known as Morehouse College.

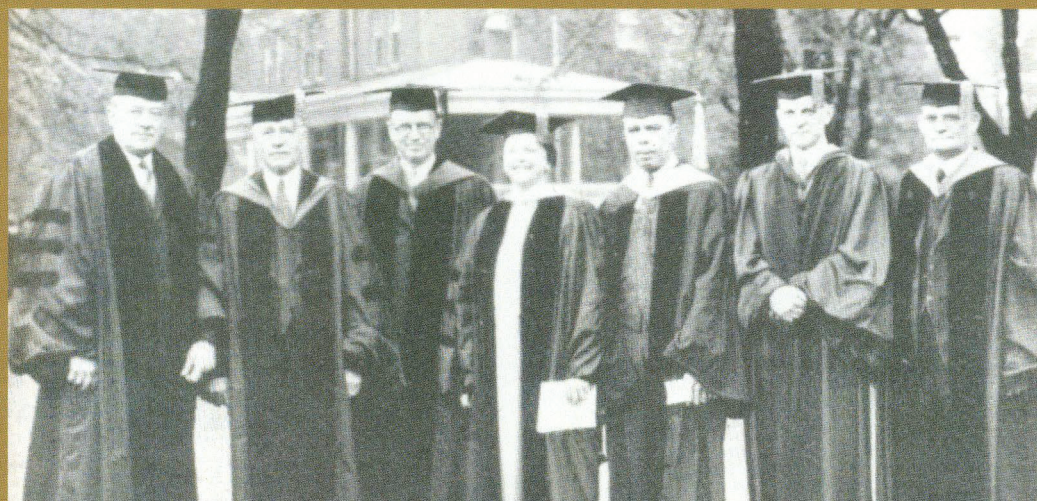
In 1906 he became the first African-American president of the college. He felt his greatest accomplishment was positioning the school as the nation's first college to offer graduate-level education for African Americans. He became president of Atlanta University in 1929.

He died on February 20, 1936, and is buried on the Atlanta University campus.





*Left: President John Hope, circa 1935*



*Top Right: Atlanta University Center dignitaries at graduation ceremony, 1930. John Hope, second on the left.*



*Bottom Right: John Hope (center), signing the Articles of Affiliation, creating the consortium between Spelman College, Morehouse College and Atlanta University. At left is President Florence Read of Spelman College; at right is President Myron Adams of Atlanta University.*



# John Hope: The Humanitarian

“There is a brotherhood that knows no creed, nor color,” John Hope once said. They were words he lived by. He believed in getting African-Americans to help themselves, and he fought for them to receive full civil rights. John Hope was an inspirational speaker who enjoyed reading and was a strong writer. Hope was a humble man and never sought praise for his work. He was faced with many challenges in balancing his position as an educational leader and civil rights activist. However, he remained highly respected in both.

John Hope was known for having a giving spirit, whether it was giving back to his community as a teacher, or as a social activist. As a teacher, his guidance and counseling went outside the classroom and beyond graduation. Hope recognized the significance in investing in his students and thrived to be a living example of what each student could someday become—a successful, educated and powerful

leader for African-Americans. Hope was never one to accept social injustice or turn a blind eye when he knew someone needed help.

Hope was a mild-mannered man who understood restraint when it came to activism. Restraint, however, was not a virtue he exercised when it came to donations. Hope was known to donate a more generous amount than he could afford to African-American charities, organizations and institutions.

During the last few years of his life, Hope took on a monumental effort: rid the area near Morehouse College of blight and despair. Beaver Slide, as the area was called then, was a reminder of society's ills. The stench of degradation, poverty, decay, disease and immorality permeated the air. Hope took advantage of a federal slum clearance program to promote an experiment in public housing. John Hope instituted a new way of life for those citizens that the outside chose to ignore and neglect.

John Hope questioned if future generations would understand what he tried to do. He would ask, before his death in February 1936, “I wonder whether my work is done?”





*Left: John Hope, left, with his wife, Lugenia, and two of their five children in Atlanta.*



*Top Right: Strong Street NW in the 1930s.*



*Bottom Right: John Hope's gravesite at Atlanta University.*



# John Hope: The World Leader



W.E.B. Du Bois

John Hope did more than seek equality and educational standards for African-Americans in Atlanta. He sought to change the nation. In the fight for racial justice, he supported all facets of equality, including housing, public education, job opportunities and recreational facilities.

He joined his close friend W.E.B. DuBois in the Niagara Movement, which opposed racial segregation and disenfranchisement as well as the policies of accommodation and conciliation promoted by Booker T. Washington. Hope was also one of the first members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

John Hope was a statesman who published articles and lectured around the United States. Later in life, Hope visited Scotland, his father's birthplace. In 1918 he lived in France, where he represented the interests of black American soldiers during World War I. Hope considered this the most meaningful accomplishment of his career.

Hope became the first president for the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, established in 1919 during the aftermath of race riots in several Southern cities. The organization worked to deter lynchings, mob violence and peonage. It also attempted to educate white Southerners on the worst aspects of racism.

Hope was also an active member of the National Urban League and Atlanta's American Baptist Home Mission Society chapter; and he was president of the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools. Hope spent time early in his career traveling the North speaking of the need for liberal arts colleges in the South.

John Hope dedicated his life to bettering the standard of living for African-Americans. It was his passion.





*Left: John Hope in Europe during World War I.*



*Top Right: Atlanta NAACP, 1917. John Hope, top row, second from right.*



*Bottom Right: founding members of the Niagara Movement including John Hope (top row, third from left), and W.E.B. Du Bois (middle row, fourth from left).*



## Welcome to Atlanta

Atlanta rose triumphantly from the ashes of the Civil War to become the major progressive city of the South. This is where the nation's public housing was born.

In 1933, Atlanta stepped forward to take on the problems of housing and poverty. Not far from the center of its central downtown were areas of decay and rot. These slums bred overcrowding, disease, death, and crime. Atlanta real estate developer Charles F. Palmer first saw slum clearance as a business opportunity, but ultimately began to see it as a chance to move humanity a step forward. Palmer pulled prominent businessmen and leaders, including John Hope, president of Morehouse College, and Clark Howell, publisher of the Atlanta Constitution, into the cause. They convinced Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes that Atlanta's proposal to build public housing projects — separate ones for whites and blacks — would be a great and successful experiment.

While other cities across America, such as New York and Chicago, were also receiving federal money to replace their slums with new housing, Atlanta was first to carry through with the developments. In



*Left: John Hope at an Atlanta University groundbreaking ceremony.*





*Top Right: (Photo: Clashing of the Soul) At right, Charles Palmer. At left, Clark Howell.*

*Bottom Right: the junction of Larkin Street, Greensferry Avenue and Chapel Street in Beaver Slide.*

Techwood Flats in the near north side of town, and in Beaver Flats just west of the city's heart, ramshackle wooden homes crowded along dirt paths. Those paths were paved, and Techwood Homes and University Homes went up and history was made.

University Homes' neighborhood newspaper, The Tab, described life in the then-new housing project this way in 1939: "No doubt many native Atlantans or those who have spent the major portion of their lives in this great city have observed in amazement the great changes effected in developing what was once a veritable inferno of crime, dereliction, and unhealthful environmental conditions into a garden spot for rehabilitating disappointed and broken spirits. This hallowed spot, set up in what was one of the most unpopular areas of this southern metropolis, has proved to skeptics that there was a possibility for a transformation to occur, as if prompted by the magic wand of the fictional wizard of Oz."



## Beaver Slide

Beaver Slide, a slum of wooden shanties and dirt streets, became John Hope Homes. It was the second public housing project for blacks in the United States, and was named for the man who served as president of Morehouse College and Atlanta University.

The homes, an add-on to University Homes, were opened to residents in 1940.

Atlanta was the first city to answer the call to the need for low-cost public housing. Prior to its construction in 1938, the residents of Beaver Slide lived in substandard living conditions -- poor ventilation, lack of sanitation facilities, overcrowding and dilapidated construction.

John Hope Homes was part of a federal slum clearance program. John Hope saw President Franklin D. Roosevelt's program as an opportunity to rebuild impoverished portions of Atlanta such as Beaver Slide to the west side of the railroad tracks, wedged between downtown and West End.

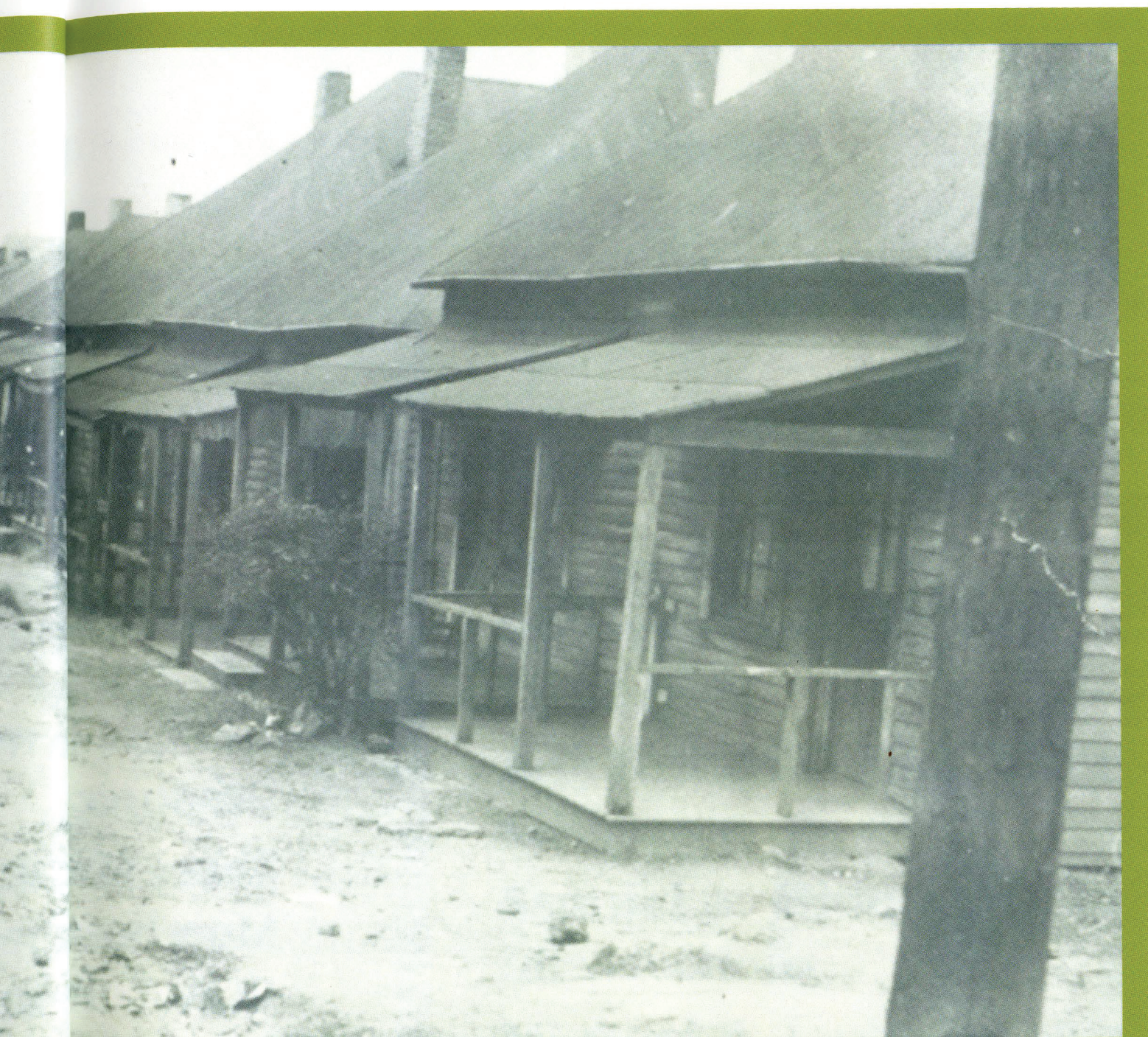
In it lived many of the city's least powerful residents -- the poor.

Atlanta businessman Charles F. Palmer worked with John Hope to create the new era of public housing.



*Beaver Slide in the early 1930s.*





One hot afternoon the two climbed a nearby hill to get a better view.

“I had to hold his arm to assist him part of the way,” Palmer wrote. “But when he reached the top, his heavy gray head lifted, and his clear blue eyes swept down across the sorry scene below with what I can only describe as militant benevolence. The thought struck me that here was a man who had probably worked harder and braved more scorn than anyone my life had ever touched. ‘I’ve dreamed about this place changing into something beautiful,’ he said, making a wide gesture with his hand. ‘Not pretty but straight and clean and full of light.’”



*Charles Palmer*



## The Poor and Heavy Laden

On 17.5 acres northeast of Spelman College was a slum of small shacks and shanties made of weak and rotten wood planks. In the early 1930s nearly half of the 425 houses were condemned as unfit for human habitation. Many had no running water, lacked bath tubs and toilets, had poor ventilation, and were structurally unsound. Children ran in the narrow streets and played next to outhouses in the tiny backyards. Overcrowding added to the unhealthy potential for disease and sickness. Beaver Slide, once a respectable part of the city, fell to disrepair, lawlessness and immorality.

The slum was born of poor people flooding into Atlanta from other parts of the South and of property owners who did little other than collect rent.

"Beaver Slide will never pass until society all over the world learns how to do its duty by the underprivileged and under-advantaged," said educator and civil rights activist John Hope." Beaver Slide is a condition of character, an economic condition, an educational and health condition."

As much as society and even Atlanta's middle-class African Americans frowned down on Beaver Slide, John Hope understood poor citizens' circumstances



*Left: Preparing a meal at the back of a house along Greensferry Avenue in Beaver Slide.*



and aspirations for a better quality of life. Where others saw hopelessness, John Hope envisioned the possibilities. Even before there was talk of constructing public housing, he dreamed of the idea of replacing this rundown district with individual cottages.

In the midst of failing health, he took advantage of a federal slum clearance program to advocate for an experiment in public housing.

John Hope envisioned a new way of life for those citizens that the outside chose to ignore and neglect. With the help of white businessman Charles F. Palmer and other prominent black and white leaders, he took paved the way for an experiment that became the first public housing projects for blacks in the United States.



*Top Right: Dilapidated housing in Beaver Slide.*

*Bottom Right: The layout for John Hope Homes.*



## A New Deal

Atlanta businessman Charles F. Palmer viewed slum clearance as both a business opportunity and a humanitarian gesture. In the early 1930s, he lived in the well-to-do neighborhood of Brookwood Hills, just off Peachtree Street in north Atlanta. His daily drive to work took him through a rundown area near Georgia Tech. It was, he said, crowded with “dilapidated dwellings, ragged, dirty children, reeking outhouses – a human garbage dump – a slum.” Palmer, as president of the National Association of Building Owners and Managers, had connections with the Roosevelt Administration’s New Deal, which made money available for low-cost housing and slum clearance. The New Deal, Palmer said, “allocated more than a hundred million dollars for loan to nonprofit corporations if they would add a little equity, clear slums, and build housing. The whole matter was new and untried.”

The Techwood Homes public housing project was born. It was the nation’s first and while he was overseeing its birth, Palmer received a call from Atlanta University President John Hope, who wanted to create a similar public housing area in Beaver Slide, where you now stand. The two became partners in



*Top Left: University Homes*

*Bottom Left: Techwood Flats, the slum that was redeveloped as Techwood Homes*



creating University Homes, the nation's first housing project for African-Americans.

The New Deal was a first for America – a helping hand to the unfortunate and impoverished who could not help themselves. On Oct. 13, 1933, the federal government approved funding for 600 white families at Techwood and 800 African-American families at University Homes.

It was also a first for Atlanta. From this came the Atlanta Housing Authority, born on June 11, 1938. That year AHA made plans to create three new projects – Clark Howell Homes, built alongside Techwood Homes; John Hope Homes, alongside University Homes; and Capitol Homes, at the foot of the state capitol.

Construction cost of John Hope Homes was \$3,054,621, roughly \$2,600 per apartment. Today, AHA is the largest housing agency in Georgia and one of the largest in the nation, serving approximately 50,000 people.



*Right: President Franklin Roosevelt tours the newly dedicated Techwood Homes.*

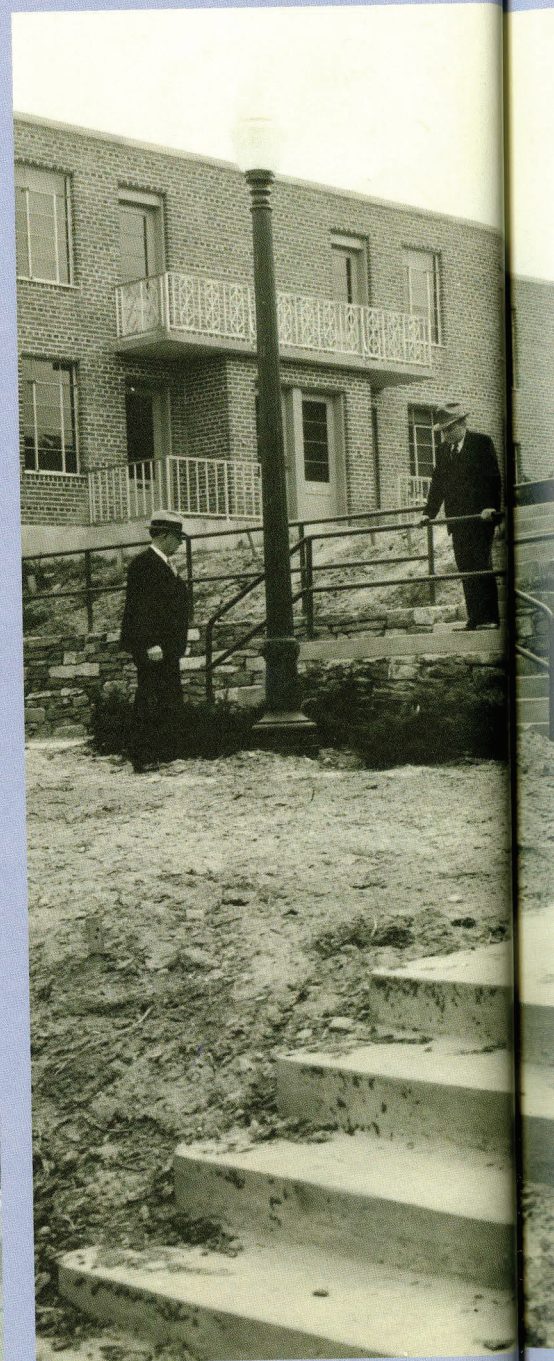


## Dawn of a New Day



*Top Left: Atlanta Mayor William Hartsfield speaks at the dedication of University Homes, May 1937.*

*Bottom Left: Looking north on Chapel Street in Beaver Slide, in the mid 1930s*







*Right: inspectors taking a final look before the opening of John Hope Homes.*

John Hope knew the people of Beaver Slide wanted what he wanted -- a safe and decent place to live. Hope and his family lived in a small residence not far from Beaver Slide, on Beckwith Street. In September 1933, physically frail from his work as college president and civil rights leader, John Hope heard about a federal government program with money available to low-profit corporations for use in low-cost housing. This was the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933.

A nine-block territory near Georgia Tech University, where whites lived, was in the same poor condition as Beaver Slide. Tech Flats was also in the federal government's plans. Hope was convinced that this was a perfect opportunity for Beaver Slide. This brought John Hope together with Atlanta real estate developer Charles F. Palmer. Palmer and Hope took the plan to Washington, DC. Two separate ad hoc advisory committees were formed. Palmer represented the white faction and Hope, despite faltering health, chaired the group proposing University Homes for blacks. Hope's commitment and perseverance paid off. Three months after the process began, the government not only accepted the plan for the first black and the first white public

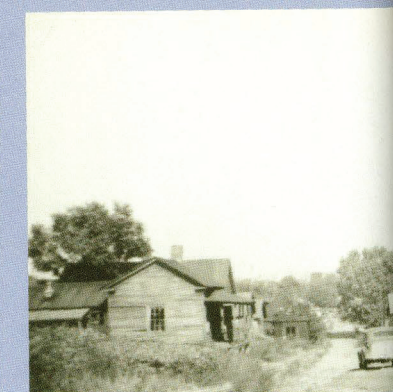
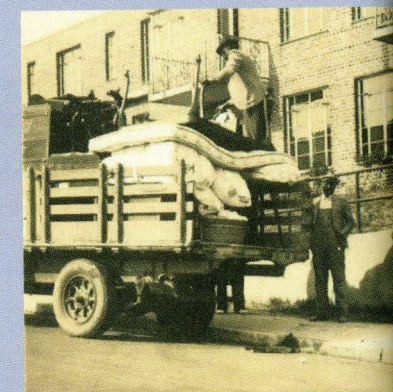
housing projects, it went one step better and decided to take over complete financial control. The office of The Federal Emergency Housing Corporation was designated to handle construction and management of University Homes and Techwood Homes.

Even though Techwood Homes was the first to open, the future site of University Homes was where the first blow to slum clearance was struck. On September 29, 1934, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes came to Beaver Slide and pressed a button that detonated dynamite placed in an abandoned slum shack. When the dust settled, Ickes spoke his mind.

"As a people we ought to be as deeply ashamed of our slums as we were about our child labor," he said. "We have known that they are a disgrace to our civilization. ... The cost of slums is high from every point of view: economic, political, social, and moral. They are so costly it is a matter of surprise that a supposedly prudent and businesslike people should so long have endured these unsightly and objectionable warrens that we have permitted mean, women, and children to call their homes."

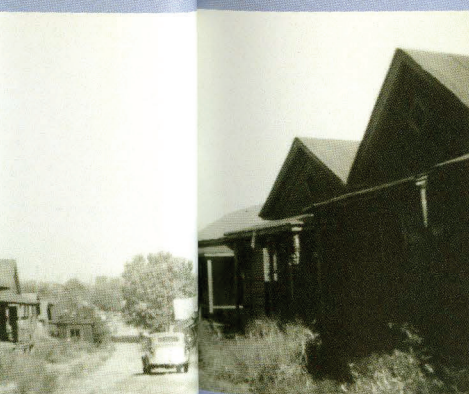
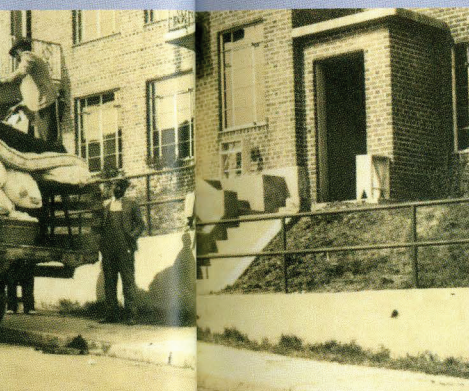


# From Nothing to Something



*Top Left: The slum Beaver Slide, in forefront, makes way for construction of University Homes.  
At rear is Atlanta University.*





*Middle: (top to bottom) Moving out of Beaver Slide, moving into University Homes., and a street scene in Beaver Slide*



*Right: A garden tended by residents at John Hope Homes in the 1940s*

Both Beaver Slide and Techwood Flats entered the 20th century as slums that were unable to pull themselves out of the spiral of economic and spiritual poverty. In the early 1930s both became beneficiaries of the combined efforts of the New Deal, John Hope and Charles Palmer, who pushed for the enormous change from slum to then-modern housing projects. The change was radical and remarkable.



## First in the Nation



*Left: President Franklin Roosevelt at the dedication of Techwood Homes, November 29, 1935.*



*Right: three*





*Right: Charles Palmer, with two of his three daughters.*

Leading up to the Great Depression, there was a general belief in America that the for-profit real estate model provided adequate housing for everyone, from the rich to the poor. Even the boom years of the 1920s should have provided enough proof that many of the poor lived in severely substandard housing. Atlanta's Beaver Slide and Techwood Flats were the proof. No matter how good the times were elsewhere, those areas were horrible slums, where the young and old and everyone in between went without adequate shelter, education, nutrition or opportunity to improve their lives.

Several European countries, particularly the United Kingdom, had pioneered public housing after World War I by creating blocks of apartment-style buildings with plazas and green space. It was not until Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1933 that the US government took the concept seriously. His New Deal was indeed a new approach, inserting government into places it had not been before. He called it "bold, persistent experimentation" and Atlanta was an early beneficiary of these new ideas.

Of the 55 federally funded public housing projects built in America from 1933 to 1937, Atlanta was at the head of the line for funding, thanks mostly to area businessman Charles F. Palmer and Atlanta University President John Hope, who took the cause of better housing to the nation's capital. In October 1933, the construction of Techwood Homes and University Homes was approved.

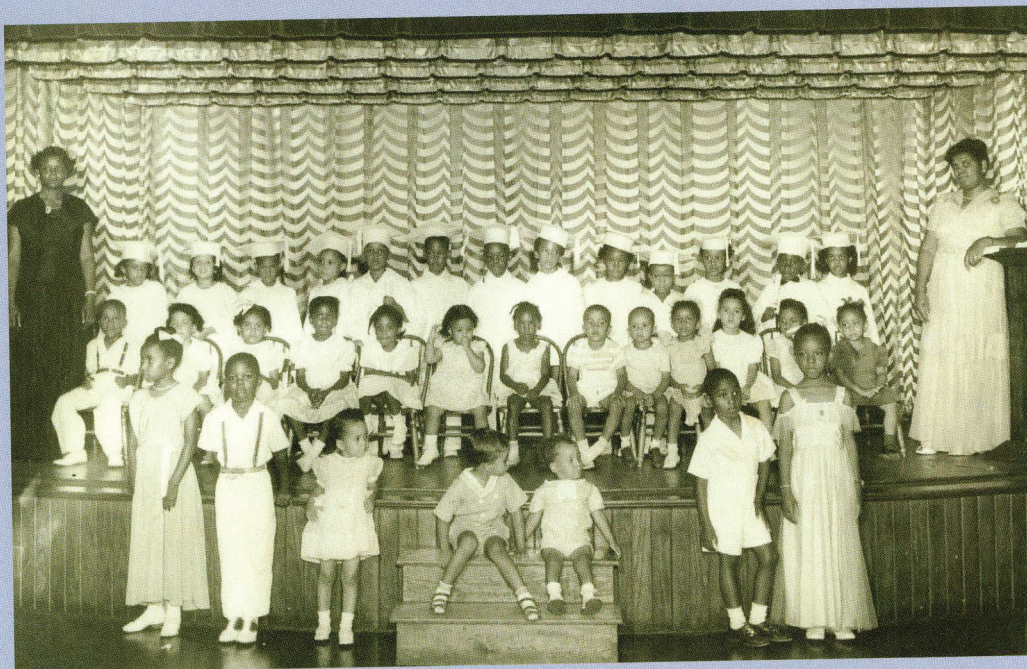
Ground was broken for Techwood Homes in September 1934 and FDR came to town to dedicate the project on November 29, 1935. Less than a year later, on August 15, 1936, the first residents of the nation's first federally funded public housing project moved into their new home. University Home opened its doors to residents soon after, on April 17, 1937.



# Life in Public Housing



Boxing champ Archie Moore  
gives a lesson in 1987



Top Row: a block party at University Homes in the 1940s; a party at Techwood Homes in  
1940; groups of kids at University Homes/John Hope Homes in the 1940s.





*Bottom Row: A groups of kids at University Homes/John Hope Homes in the 1940s; football at Techwood-Clark Howell in the early 1940s; a pageant at John Hope Homes, 1940s*



## The Atlanta Model

Where creating affordable housing alternatives for low-income families is concerned, Atlanta has been the nation's leader. And it continues to be so.

The first public housing community in the United States was built in Atlanta in the late 1930s – Techwood Homes near Georgia Tech. The second housing project was built in the slum called Beaver Slide, and this development was called University Homes. The housing projects were created to replace the slums that blighted the city and ruined the lives of those unfortunate enough to live in them.

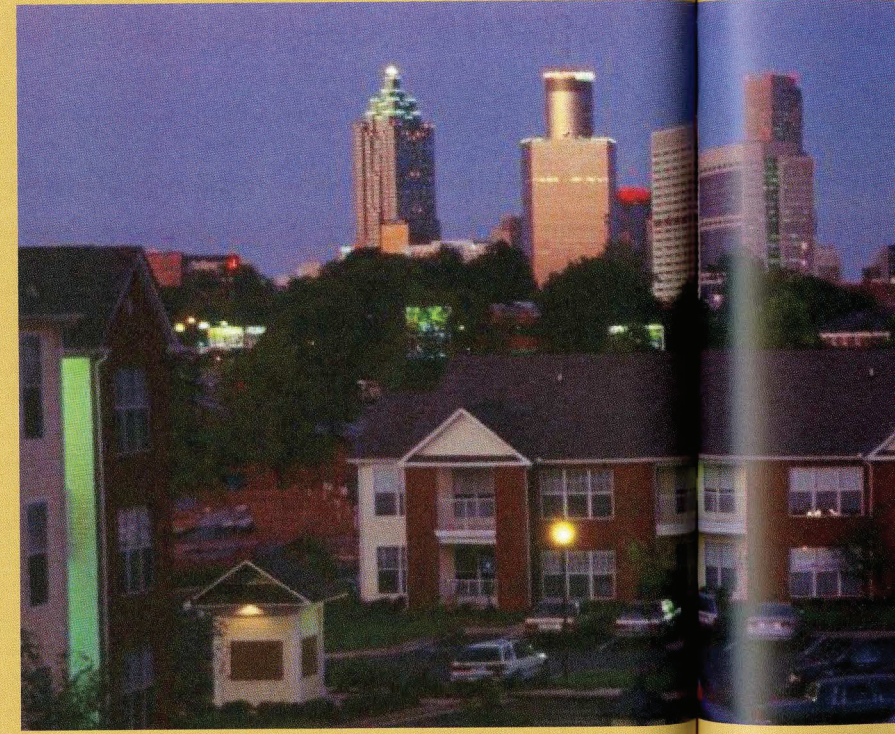
For many years the housing projects served as new

communities that gave people a chance for advancement in life that they had been denied for many years. But as time went by, societal changes and the policies governing public housing in Atlanta and the nation gradually became counterproductive. Instead of creating opportunities, public housing began to destroy aspirations for a better life. Designed to address one issue – housing for low-income families – public housing became a dumping ground for a host of problems, ranging from places to house ex-convicts to warehouses for the emotionally and physically disabled. Politicians who catered to

segregation means to re physically a By all meas housing fail of paint was of affordable Not long 1996 Olymp the fall of 1 raze the pro city that wa



*Left: Atlanta Housing Authority Chief Executive Officer Renee Glover*





segregationists in the South saw public housing as a means to remove black citizens from Atlanta – both physically and from the economic life of the city. By all measures – jobs, education, safety – public housing failed, and could not be resurrected. A coat of paint wasn't the solution; revolutionary rethinking of affordable housing was.

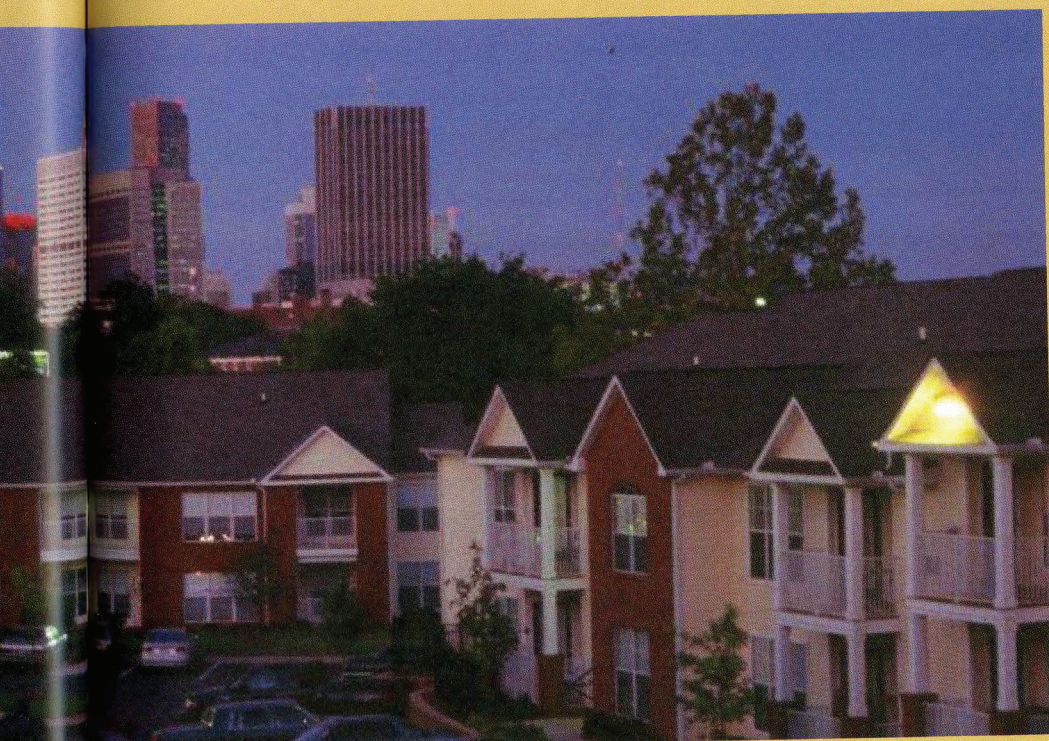
Not long after Atlanta was chosen to host the 1996 Olympic Games, a bold decision was made in the fall of 1994 to end traditional public housing and raze the projects. As a result, Atlanta again became a city that was first in pioneering progressive affordable

housing policy. Severely distressed housing projects, such as John Hope Homes and Techwood Homes, were replaced with vibrant mixed-income communities.

That overhaul became known as the “Atlanta Model.” Its goal was the creation of mixed-use, mixed-income communities that combined private sector knowledge and investment with public resources. The hallmarks of the “Atlanta Model” for housing assistance are schools that emphasize achievement; the creation of recreational facilities, retail and commercial services; child care;

ease of access to public transportation; and intense counseling to help low-income families achieve the good life. Rather than concentrating poverty in housing projects – a policy shown to have produced endless human failure – poorer families now are no longer stigmatized, and live alongside other income groups. Eventually, the once-poor families have achieved educational and financial success that make them fully part of society's mainstream.

AHA is the largest housing agency in Georgia and one of the nation's largest.



*Middle and Right: The Village at Castleberry Hill*



## Let the Games Begin

When Atlanta was chosen to host the 1996 Olympics, many city leaders saw an opportunity to show the world just how good the city could be with the eyes of the world watching. Here was the chance to prove what they had always thought – that the city was as good or better as many others around the planet that were regarded as world-class.

And why not? Atlanta had plenty about which to be proud. The population continued to swell every year and was predicted to hit 3 million by the time the Olympic torch was lit. The airport, with a then-new international concourse, was to become the

world's busiest, making it easy to travel the world from here, and for the rest of the world to come to Atlanta. Eleven Fortune 500 businesses were headquartered in the metro area, many of them world-renowned brands such as Coca-Cola and Delta Airlines.

But the city also had its shame. In 1992, only one other city in America had a higher poverty rate than Atlanta, as 27 percent of those in the city lived below the poverty line. At that time no other city had a higher rate of violent crime and few had a higher unemployment rate for African-Americans.



*Left: Centennial Place*



*Middle: Olympic spirit in Atlanta, 1996.*



Public education was failing and the inner city core was rapidly losing wealth and population.

All of this was seen as an opportunity to make improvements. Centennial Olympic Stadium was built, later to morph into Turner Field, home of the Atlanta Braves. Centennial Olympic Park in downtown was built. Much of the city received a makeover in the form of newly paved roads and expanded public transportation.

Eliminating the blight of public housing was also on the agenda. Redeveloping the site of Techwood/Clark Howell Homes was first, and that meant trans-

forming it from its then-shabby condition into a mixed-use community that was created with public and private money. A vibrant Centennial Place rose from Techwood/Clark Howell, and set the standard for the Atlanta Model of successful housing that ended the blight of the housing projects' concentrated poverty. The site of John Hope Homes was developed as another Atlanta Housing Authority sponsored mixed-income community, the Village of Castleberry Hill.



*Right: (left to right) Resident Leader Louise Whatley, Atlanta Housing Authority Chief Executive Officer Renee Glover, and HUD's Kevin Marchman at the groundbreaking for Centennial Place in 1995.*



## Along Came Hope

Local and federal governments looked public housing squarely in the eyes during the early 1990s. It didn't take long for them to declare that Franklin Roosevelt's great experiment in housing the poor had been devastated by misguided policies and a steady erosion of expectations and standards. High crime rates, low graduation rates, the racial and economic segregation of African-Americans topped the list of reasons for the malaise.

Many of the buildings, some dating back to the mid-1930s, were crumbling. Repairing or replacing them while cloaked in the same failed policies had become a revolving door to repeated failure. From this reality arose the federal government's HOPE series of ideas and concepts. . The most comprehensive and thoughtful of this series, HOPE VI, grew out of report of the National Commission on Distressed Public Housing. In October 1992, the Urban Revitalization Demonstration Program (which later became known as HOPE VI), authorized a major new allocation of capital funds for the removal and replacement of the nation's most blighted and distressed public housing. In effect, the HOPE VI Program provided significant seed capital and a regulatory environment where housing authorities and private developers could think "outside of the traditional public housing box" and create communities of choice and opportunity. Housing authorities, local governments, private developers and other

civic-minded stakeholders were challenged to come up with a new approach to housing the working poor. Congress mandated that the new communities must become assets in the neighborhoods that had been devastated by blighted public housing projects. It also meant a change in the approach to public housing residents, who for so long had been marginalized and written-off by the larger society.

The Atlanta Housing Authority, the City of Atlanta, private developers and civic leaders seized the challenge and used HOPE VI to directly attack the problem of concentrated poverty by beginning a process that over time has eliminated all of the major public housing projects in the city. Using the funding and regulatory relief provided under HOPE VI and leveraging the fact that the Centennial Olympic Games were coming to Atlanta in July 1996, AHA and its private sector development partners, The Integral Partnership of Atlanta, created the legal, regulatory and financial model for the first mixed-use, mixed-income community with public housing-assisted units in the country, Centennial Place. Within the framework of HOPE VI, as conceptualized in Atlanta (the Atlanta Model), public funds leveraged private investment and private sector know-how to create healthy, mixed-use, mixed-income communities where the failed housing projects once stood. As part of the master plans, the quality of life infrastructure was restored—neighborhood schools,



parks and green space, retail, commercial uses, so that the neighborhood can become a place where all of Atlanta's citizens desire to live. The affected public housing residents had choice about where they wanted to live. Approximately 70 percent of the affected residents chose to use Section 8 vouchers to help pay for housing of their choice, and some chose to move to other public housing developments. As the phases of the new mixed-income communities were opened, affected residents were given a choice as to whether they wished to return. Some chose to come back, most chose to keep their vouchers,

which represented greater mobility to the families. In both cases, the affected residents, once stigmatized as failures, entered the mainstream. Academic studies have shown that their employment and educational success soon became indistinguishable from the mainstream. The greatest beneficiaries have been the children, who no longer were condemned to failing schools in the projects but found opportunity at new schools that reflected the demographics of the entire community.

The strategy has worked in Atlanta. The Villages of Castleberry Hill was once one of the poorest neigh-

borhoods in town, Beaver Slide. Then it became the site of John Hope Homes, one of the first public housing developments in the nation. Now, the Villages of Castleberry Hills is one of the first mixed-use, mixed-income developments in the nation.



*Left: AHA resident Tomeika Dunn and family*



*Right: AHA resident Darrel Lightfoot and son.*



## Good Neighbors

The Atlanta Housing Authority is a trailblazing organization. It was the first to build federally funded public housing in the United States. And it is the first to replace its housing projects with mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods, the creations of partnerships using public and private funds and resources to create an entirely new concept in housing.

The downfall of public housing was, ultimately, caused by bad policies and low expectations and standards. Poor policymaking decisions doomed the original spirit of public housing as a place where those who needed it received a helping hand, a temporary place to stay before moving on to a better life. Public housing projects became islands unto themselves where expectations and standards spiraled downward, crime rates rose, and residents had less and less contact with a world that accepted them.

The Atlanta Housing Authority made a critical change after Atlanta was chosen to host the Centennial Olympic Games in the mid-1990s. Faced with a malfunctioning public-housing model, AHA threw out the policies and approach of the past and came up with a new model of creating mixed-use, mixed-income communities through partnerships with great private sector developers thus leveraging private sector know-how and private investment. These new communities incorporate market rate quality mixed-income rental and ownership housing opportunities; high performing neighborhood

schools that emphasize excellence and achievement; upscale retail and commercial services, great parks and green-space, and access to public transportation.

The first of these communities to be developed was Centennial Place. Its first phase was completed in the summer of 1996, just in time for the Centennial Olympic Games. Built on the site of the former Techwood and Clark Howell housing projects, Centennial Place offers market rate residential rental apartments with seamlessly integrated affordable units built in. There are also great upscale townhomes for sale at various price points. The community features



*Left: Villages of Carver*



a newly built, high achieving elementary school, a YMCA, an early education and family center, and commercial and retail outlets. From this successful endeavor the "Olympic Legacy Program" was born as a way to leverage the learning from Centennial Place and expand mixed-use, mixed-income community development in Atlanta. The area surrounding Centennial Place has continued to grow and thrive, and to become a vital part of Atlanta.

To date, AHA has sponsored the development of more than 16 mixed-use, mixed-income communities and the results are there for the world to

see. Another successful example of a great revitalized neighborhood that leveraged AHA's strategy is The Villages of East Lake. The community features the acclaimed Drew Charter School, the East Lake YMCA, an early childhood development center, the Charlie Yates Golf Club and the revival of retail and residential life in the East Lake neighborhood.

AHA's commitment to creating better housing choices and redeveloping many of Atlanta's communities has had a positive impact on all of Atlanta's residents, especially low-income residents. As a result of its new policies and approaches, AHA is now seen

as a good corporate citizen and an asset in the City of Atlanta, stimulating private investment throughout the city and helping to drive the renewal of the city.



*Middle and Right: Centennial Place*



# The Future



*Left: The Village at Castleberry Hill*

*Top Right: AHA's President and CEO, Renee Lewis Glover*





Atlanta's housing projects were originally not created for residents to live in, generation after generation, and never leave. They were created to give opportunity to those who had been denied it, to allow people to grow and move back into the mainstream of American life. The Atlanta Model is designed to do that – reinvigorate the original aim of public housing as an opportunity for the less fortunate to create a better life.

The Atlanta Housing Authority has created the future and is fixed firmly upon following the new path it started in 1995. It is moving away from the traditional model of a municipal housing authority to become a diversified real-estate company with a public mission and purpose. It is an entity that creates economically integrated, market-rate quality, mixed-income communities.

Centennial Place is the first flowering of the future the Atlanta Housing Authority envisions. Set upon the site of the nation's first federally funded housing project, Techwood Homes, Centennial Place has replaced the severely distressed public housing project that had become a public eyesore and an impediment to progress for those who lived in it. Centennial Place is a community that integrates people of mixed incomes and features an educationally rigorous elementary school, a YMCA, and commercial outlets.

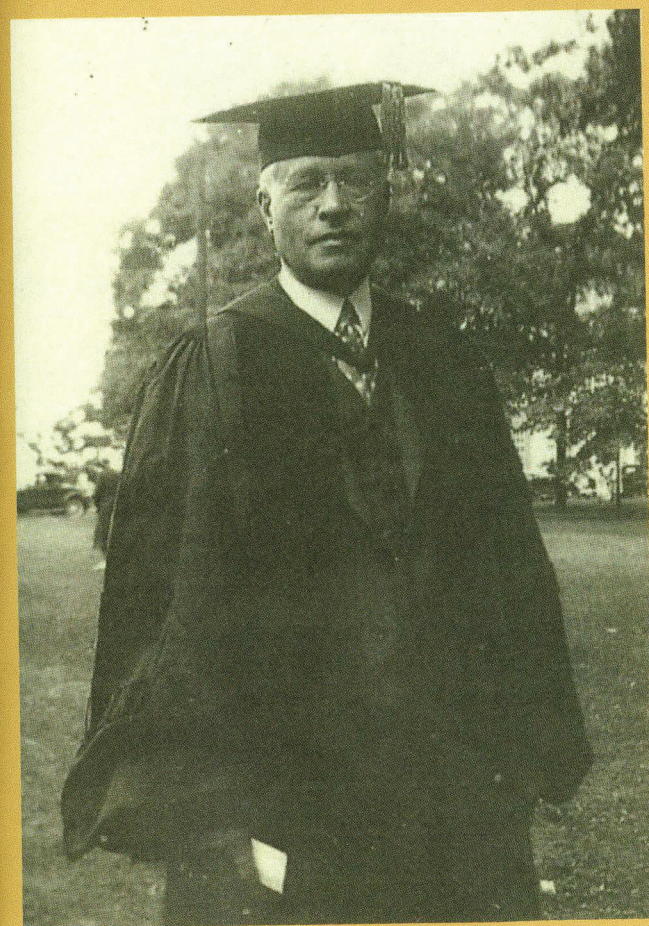
Centennial Place's creation is giving public housing residents a better chance than ever of making new and better lives for themselves.

The surrounding neighborhood has benefited as well. Since Centennial Place was developed, Georgia Tech has jumped across the Downtown Connector and expanded eastward into Midtown; the Georgia Aquarium, the world's largest aquarium, opened in 2005; Centennial Olympic Park, one of the city's largest plazas, opened in Downtown; and the World of Coke moved into a new home near the aquarium.

This development is at or near the borders of Centennial Place and all was created after the revitalization of the former Techwood/Clark Howell Homes properties.

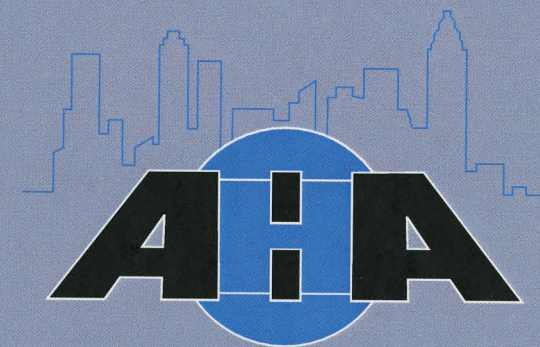
Most important of all is helping public housing residents improve their lives through better public policy. It is the Atlanta Housing Authority's belief that all people are children of God with unlimited human potential. With investment in building quality affordable housing centered on creating communities with children and families as their focus, the Atlanta Housing

Authority has helped unleash that potential. And, Atlanta has taken giant strides toward becoming a global city, in part because of the transformation of obsolete housing projects into healthy communities for all income groups.



Bottom Right: John Hope





Atlanta Housing Authority